

DELEGATE GALLAGHER: Mr. President and ladies and gentlemen of the Convention, we come at last to the subject matter that has been the object of some correspondence these past several weeks. I apologize for all the memoranda but it becomes necessary to provide you with as much material as possible because of the various arguments that were being scattered about with respect to single-member districts. This Convention disposed at one point of the question of whether or not there should be exclusive single-member districts by voting 83 to 52 in the affirmative. Since that time there has been considerable pressure brought to bear by the wooden soldiers of the status quo — to use a phrase which is bandied about these days — who are afraid that their positions of security will be impaired by this particular approach. I apologize to them. It is quite true that the proposal that you had before you is identical with that which you have rejected before and which I commended at one time, but let me say that a preacher before the burial often commends the deceased before the final ceremony, and I would hope that the same parallel would apply in this particular situation.

In the matter of history, I should simply like to say that Maryland has from the beginning — although Delegate Lord overlooked the fact — used the single-member district in the Senate and did so quite recently because under the 1776, the 1851, and 1864 Constitutions, there were provisions for a senator from each county. Thus, the single-member district aspect has been one which we have had for quite some time as far as the history of Maryland is concerned.

Make no mistake about it, this particular amendment you have before you would be the death knell of the single-member district approach because we would know what would happen if this matter were left up to the General Assembly. You can be quite certain that in the interest of trying to keep all those who are in office in office in the future that immediately they would go to the multi-member districts throughout the State of Maryland. I think that is quite obvious.

The opposition that you have been hearing has been the opposition from men and women who serve in the House and the Senate and who live close to each other, and they do not like the geography of the situation. They are opposing this bill primarily because of the fact that it would scatter the representation geographically and they might be forced to move.

I submit that this is not too great a price to pay for the admitted and obvious advantages which the single-member district does provide.

You have had spread before you this particular throwaway from the state legislature's progress report which indicates the remarkable success which single-member districts have found in other states, and I will not bore you with reading it. You may read it yourself, but it certainly puts to rest the arguments which Delegate Lord just made about the alleged lack of success of single-member districts elsewhere. You have been heretofore provided with the population census of those which used the single-member district and fortunately we have not heard yet today the argument of a parochial system. When you look at the position of Maryland with respect to these other states when we still have an average of almost 33,000 persons per delegate districts and 100,000 per senate district there is no parochial system when indeed one of the delegate districts is twice as large as Kent County is or will be in 1970.

We have also attempted to demonstrate to you through the material you have had that it is not true that in Baltimore City you will have a few square blocks that will make up a single-member district. On the basis of two different approaches which we have attempted to make we have demonstrated that on the average every single-member district ought to have at least one hundred square blocks even though it be the smallest in the City of Baltimore. I submit to you that one hundred square blocks is no small amount of territory for anyone to be able to consider and be able to wrap up and put in somebody's back pocket. It simply is not the case.

The best argument I can make to you about the fear which has been engendered and promoted and expanded about the interests of the single-member representative in a small area when he votes in the General Assembly, is this: that this constitution is going to go a long way toward sending local problems back from Annapolis, back to the county seat, and that consequently those areas of interest which might naturally attract someone on a parochial basis will simply not be before the members of the General Assembly. They will be here not as representatives of neighborhoods to vote neighborhood issues, which in reality under the present Constitution are really local issues, but they will be down here dealing with the questions that